

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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STATEHOUSE REPORT FROM REP. BOB BISCHOFF

INDIANAPOLIS – Committee work was the order of the day in the Indiana House this week, as lawmakers moved toward the next set of major deadlines in this 2006 legislative session.

In my reports this year, I have emphasized the shortened calendar that is so much a part of a short session, and here is yet another indication. Last week, House committees began working on bills sent to our chamber from the Indiana Senate. By next Thursday (February 23), we must complete that committee work.

With most of the major bills this session currently in the Senate, we continue to keep an eye on what is happening in that chamber. I will be interested to see how senators handle property tax relief and the governor's plan to sell the Indiana Toll Road to foreign interests.

One Senate committee already has halted a plan to move the ISTEP test from the fall to the spring, citing concerns expressed by House Democrats and Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed about the \$45 million price tag to make the switch.

For now, the House's attention is on Senate bills. This week, I thought I would give you some idea of the measures coming through House committees. In all, more than 70 bills were scheduled for consideration this past week. That's nearly half the 151 Senate bills and resolutions that are still alive in the process.

Here are some of the highlights:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION: I am the House sponsor of Senate Bill 283, which would authorize a city, town or county to establish a "reverse 911" system to warn people by telephone in the event of weather emergencies like tornadoes, as well as utility outages, boil orders for drinking water contamination, evacuation notices, fires, floods, bomb threats and other disastrous situations.

EDUCATION: SB 324 requires the State Board of Education to annually study those statutes, rules and policies that restrict school corporations from allocating resources on student instruction.

CHILD SERVICES: SB 112 would move the First Steps program under the state's new Bureau of Child Services. First Steps is designed to give infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities access to early intervention services close to their homes.

DISRUPTING FUNERALS: SB 5 makes disorderly conduct a Class D Felony if it takes place within 500 feet of a funeral, burial or memorial service or visitation and disrupts those services. Violators could face up to three years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

RESISTING LAW ENFORCEMENT: SB 83 imposes a mandatory minimum sentence on any person who resists law enforcement by fleeing in a motor vehicle that causes bodily injury or death to someone else.

JURY SERVICE: SB 232 protects a person from losing a job, salary or benefits if called to jury duty. The bill also prohibits employers from requiring workers to use vacation or sick leave for jury service, and eliminates automatic exemptions from serving on a jury.

LICENSE ISSUES: SB 208 will enable a person with a specific medical condition to have that information included on

his or her driver's license, learner's permit or identification. SB 269 will require the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to issue personalized license plates every year. SB 297 increases the penalties for people who knowingly provide false information when applying for a license, permit or ID card.

Indiana House members did pass one measure of note this week. Representatives unanimously passed a resolution supporting a challenge to a U.S. District Court ruling that prevents us from starting our floor sessions with prayers that mention the name Jesus Christ or promote any specific religion.

As many of you know, since this ruling was handed down last November, House members have gathered at the back of the chamber before each session to conduct informal prayers. I have appreciated this chance to meet with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to celebrate our faith, but I hope that there will be a time in the future when we can move our prayers from the back to the front of the House chamber.

If you need to contact me about anything taking place at the Legislature, you can call using the toll-free Statehouse telephone number of 1-800-382-9842, e-mail me through my Internet web site at www.IN.gov/H68 or write to me in care of the Indiana House of Representatives, 200 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.

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